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(CHINESE PILOT)

TUCSON, ARIZ.--A CHINESE NATIONALIST PILOT PARACHUTED TO SAFETY TODAY AND HIS U.S. AIR FORCE U-2 HIGH RECONNAISSANCE PLANE CRASHED AND BURNED DURING A RAIN STORM ON THE DESERT SOUTH OF HERE.

THE PILOT WAS IDENTIFIED AS CAPT. SHIH HI SHENG, 28, OF FORMOSA. HE IS A MEMBER OF THE 4080TH STRATEGIC WING AT DAVIS-MONTHAN AIR FORCE BASE HERE.

COL. EDWARD JEWETT, BASE INFORMATION OFFICER, SAID HE IS THE SAME PILOT WHO DITCHED A U-2 NEAR MOUNTAIN HOME AFB, IDAHO, LAST AUG. 14.

SHIH HI SHENG IS AMONG A GROUP OF CHINESE NATIONALIST PILOTS TRAINING IN THE U-2 SPY PLANES AT DAVIS-MONTHAN.

JEWETT SAID SHIH HI SHENG WAS RESCUED BY AN AIR FORCE HELICOPTER MINUTES AFTER THE PLANE WENT DOWN. HE WAS PICKED UP ABOUT SIX MILES SOUTH OF THE BASE IN A DESERT AREA JUST OFF THE HEAVILY TRAVELED BENSON HIGHWAY. HE WAS TAKEN TO THE BASE HOSPITAL FOR OBSERVATION.

SAID JEWETT: "WE HAD NO CONTACT WITH THE PILOT PRIOR TO THE CRASH. HE WAS ON A LOCAL ROUTINE TRAINING MISSION AND TOOK OFF ABOUT 7:30 (MST) THIS MORNING. NO PUBLIC PROPERTY WAS DAMAGED AND THERE IS NO INDICATION AT THIS TIME AS TO WHAT MIGHT HAVE CAUSED THE CRASH."

12/18--MJ11IPES